

IV. REMARKS

Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. The claim is amended to obviate the rejection. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of either Montagne (U.S. Patent No. 3,763,911) or Japan 11-342705 and optionally further in view of Kukimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,445,201). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The admitted prior art discloses that both groove walls are inclined at 80 degrees with respect to the tread surface and that a thin rib is not provided in the main groove.

Montagne teaches a tire tread with protruding elements between adjacent ribs as shown in Figure 2. The object of this tire tread with protruding elements is to prevent undesirable furrow wear.

Japan 705 teaches a pneumatic radial tire that provides railway abrasion resistance of a second rib viewed from a shoulder side of the tread. As shown in Figure 3 of Japan 705, a slot is formed between a projection inside a groove with an inclined groove wall.

Kukimoto teaches a heavy-duty pneumatic tire with a characteristic of preventing uneven wearing of the tread surface. The Office Action particularly refers to Figs. 19 A and 19B that shows a main groove with a stepped zone 3 (a protrusion) defining a narrow groove 4 with a sidewall of the main groove disposed near a shoulder portion of the tread surface.

Claim 1 is directed to a pneumatic tire provided with a plurality of main grooves extended in a tire circumferential direction on a tread surface. Claim 1 recites that, with regard to a main groove having a groove width widened during inflation among said plurality of main grooves and including a U-shaped main groove portion and a narrow groove portion, a groove wall near a shoulder is inclined outward in a tire width direction toward a groove bottom. Claim 1 also recites that a generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib protrudes from the groove bottom along the groove wall near the shoulder and has a first slanted wall inclined outward that extends in cross-section parallel with the groove

wall near the shoulder to form the narrow groove portion therebetween and a second slanted wall inclined inward in the tire width direction. Claim 1 also recites that a groove wall near the center is inclined outward in the tire width direction toward the groove bottom and forms the generally U-shaped main groove portion with the second slanted wall of the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib.

It is respectfully submitted that none of the applied art, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the features of claim 1. Specifically, it is respectfully submitted that none of the applied art teaches or suggests a generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib protruding from a groove bottom along a groove wall near a shoulder of a pneumatic tire and has a first slanted wall inclined outward that extends in cross-section parallel with the groove wall near the shoulder to form a narrow groove portion of a main groove therebetween and a second slanted wall inclined inward in the tire width direction and that a groove wall near a center of the pneumatic tire is inclined outward in the tire width direction toward the groove bottom and forms the generally U-shaped main groove portion with the second slanted wall of the generally trapezoidally-shaped thin rib. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated to combine the features of the applied art because such combination would not result in the claimed invention.

Claims 3-5 depend from claim 1 and include all of the features of claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the dependent claims are allowable at least for the reasons claim 1 is allowable as well as for the features they recite.

Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

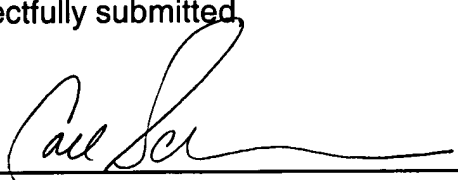
In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' representative at the telephone number listed below.

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper or if a Petition for Extension of Time is required for timely acceptance of the same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 18-0013 for any such fees and Applicant(s) hereby petition for such extension of time.

Respectfully submitted,

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